

~~SECRET~~OLL/LD
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 FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
 TO RUEHBL/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NIACT IMMEDIATE 2331
 RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6467
 INFO RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE 6776
 RUEHJI/AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE 7628
 RUEHRH/USELO RIYADH IMMEDIATE 3296
 RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE 9594
 BT
 S E C R E T DAMASCUS 01452

EXDIS

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PREL, PINS, LE, SY, SA, US
 SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR NEUMANN'S CONVERSATION WITH SYRIAN
 -- FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. DURING HIS MEETING WITH FORMER AMBASSADOR NEUMANN
 FEBRUARY 27, KHADDAM MADE THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS OF
 IMMEDIATE INTEREST:

3. GEMAYEL AS PRESIDENT: AS HE HAD TO CODEL FOWLER,
 KHADDAM IMPLIED GEMAYEL HAS ONE LAST CHANCE; IF HE
 "BURIES" MAY 17 WITH AN APPROPRIATE "FUNERAL SERVICE"
 ("QUIET CREMATION" IS INSUFFICIENT AS WOULD "LEAD TO
 PROBLEMS FOR THE HEIRS"), THEN WAY WOULD BE PAVED FOR
 NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WHICH SARG WILL DO EVERYTHING IT
 CAN TO ADVANCE. CHOICE IS GEMAYEL'S (AND HE CAN RPT
 CAN ACT EVEN AGAINST HIS FATHER'S WISHES): TO BE PRESIDENT
 OF THE LEBANESE OR OF THE PHALANGE. IN SYRIA, "WE PREFER
 GEMAYEL" (TO OTHER CANDIDATES) BECAUSE FOR 15 YEARS HE
 HAS BEEN "OUR FRIEND", MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH SARG
 EVEN WHEN BASHIR AND SARG WERE AT ODDS.

4. SAUDI MEDIATION: KHADDAM EVADED OFFERING A SITREP
 ON THE SAUDI EFFORTS, COMMENTING ONLY THAT SITUATION IS
 IN FLUX AND VERY COMPLICATED, NOT LEAST BECAUSE OF
 US BIG STICK POLICY.

5. USG ROLE: AMBASSADOR RUMSFELD CAME TO DAMASCUS
 "ASTRIDE A CANNON", PRECEDED BY US NAVAL SHELLING,
 "WHICH IS WHY HIS NEGOTIATIONS BECAME DIFFICULT."
 SYRIA WANTS IMPROVED BILATERAL RELATIONS WHICH ARE ALSO
 IN US INTEREST. IDEALLY, USG SHOULD NOW HELP GEMAYEL
 ABROGATE MAY 17, URGE ALL LEBANESE TO RECONCILIATION,
 PRESS ISRAEL TO WITHDRAW ON BASIS UNSC RESOLUTIONS,
 AND ABJURE THE "BIG STICK POLICY".

~~SECRET~~

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84 3483261 SSO

PAGE 002
TOR: 280012Z FEB 84

NC 3483261

6. FULLER MEMCON BY SEPTTEL.

7. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. RUGH
END OF MESSAGE SECRET

SECRET